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**PRESS RELEASE****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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THE PUBLIC ADVOCATES OFFICE APPLAUDS TODAY'S GROUNDBREAKING CPUC BACKUP POWER REQUIREMENT BUT DELAYS ON THESE REQUIREMENTS MAY IMPACT SOME RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS

SAN FRANCISCO, February 11, 2021 – The Public Advocates Office, the independent consumer advocate at the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), supports today's CPUC decision to require companies providing wireline communications, including landline phone service and Internet service, to have 72-hours of backup power during power outages. This new policy will protect Californians in areas with high wildfire risk, including low-income people and the elderly, who are least likely to have cell phones during emergencies. However, the Public Advocates Office raised concerns that delayed timelines for implementing these requirements may impact some residential customers.

"These difficult times are making Californians more dependent than ever on our phones and the Internet for communications to telework, visit a doctor via telehealth, attend school via distance learning, and be in touch with loved ones," said Elizabeth Echols, Director of the Public Advocates Office. "Everyone should be able to rely on their phones and Internet during power outages, regardless of where they live or what kind of phone technology they have. That is why the Public Advocates Office will continue to advocate for holding telephone companies accountable so that everyone has access to essential communications services."

The CPUC's backup power requirement for wireline communications service providers must be met in eight months for three types of facilities in areas with high fire risk: 1) critical facilities such as hospitals and fire departments, 2) facilities providing service to wireless networks, and 3) facilities serving communities lacking sufficient wireless service coverage. However, for all other facilities located in areas with high wildfire risk, the Commission delays implementation of the backup power requirement for eighteen months. The Public Advocates Office urged the Commission to require the 72-hour back up power requirements be in place by no later than October 2021 for all facilities in high fire threat areas to protect the public health and safety of Californians.

We will continue to push for backup power so all communities can rely on their phone and Internet service, especially if they live in an area with high wildfire risk.

The Public Advocates Office recommendations can be found [here](#).

For more information on the Public Advocates Office, please visit www.publicadvocates.cpuc.ca.gov.

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